

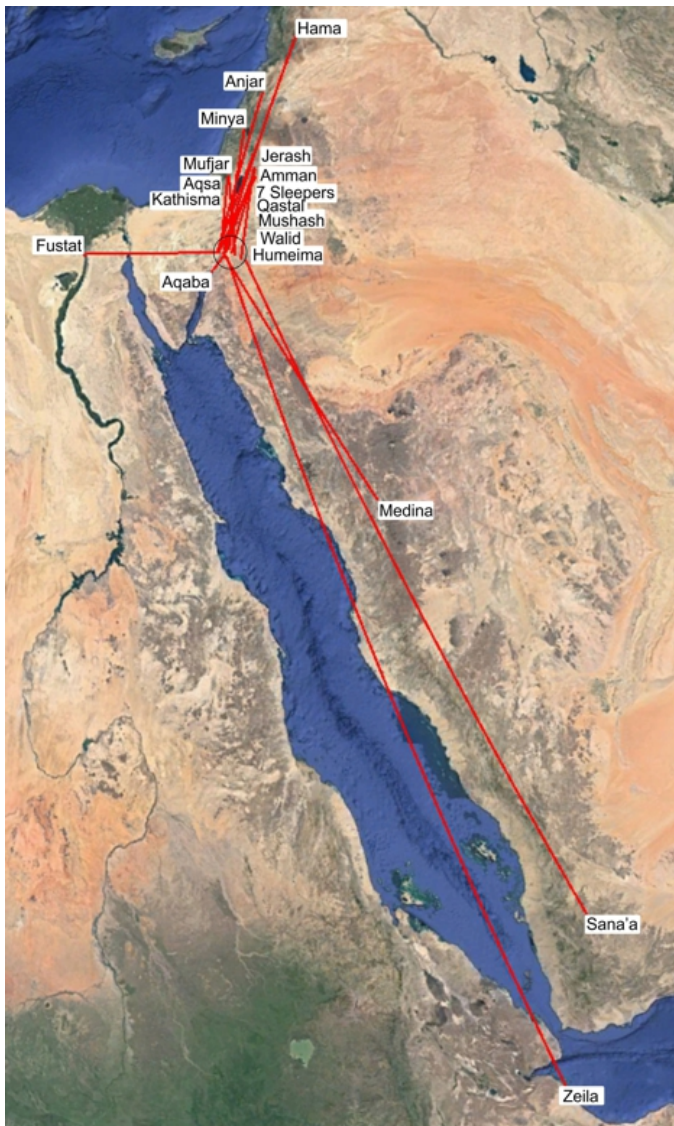
Four Ka'bas

April 2018, Dan Gibson

After releasing the documentary film, The Sacred City, a number of viewers asked me about the Ka'ba and its history. From my research of early Islamic Qiblas, it appears that the first Ka'ba was built in the city of Petra, while the last Ka'ba was built in Mecca in Saudi Arabia. With this in mind, in this paper I examine the archeological remains of what I believe is the Petra Ka'ba and compare it to the descriptions given by early Islamic writers.

Introduction

Almost every Muslim in the world can identify the Ka'ba, a rectangular black clothed building standing in Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The Black Stone resides in one corner of this building, and every day millions of Muslims face the Ka'ba while they pray, and millions visit the Ka'ba each year and circle around it while they pray.



In this paper I will focus on the four times the Ka'ba was built or re-built in recorded history. While Islamic historians speak of a Ka'ba in heaven, as well as one built by Adam, I will limit this paper to the following four: a) the Ka'ba that existed when Muḥammad was born in 570 CE, b) the Ka'ba built during Muḥammad's lifetime by the Quraysh tribe in 605 CE, c) the Ka'ba built by Ibn Zubayr around 693 CE and d) the Ka'ba built in Mecca by 'Abd al-Malik in 697 CE.

Back in 2010 I published the book "Qur'anic Geography" which contained a bare outline of an argument that Mecca was not the original holy city of Islam. This came from my initial survey of a number of early mosques, where the qibla direction pointed to an area centered on the ancient city of Petra in Southern Jordan.

Fig. 1 Left: Early mosques built facing Petra

I followed this up in 2017 with the book “*Early Islamic Qiblas*” which listed over sixty early mosques and examined their Qiblas in greater detail, providing fifty arguments that supported the Petra proposal.

After this I continued to post new research on the website <http://thesacredcity.ca>. So this paper will not deal directly with the Petra theory, but will assume that the reader is familiar with the concepts and arguments that I presented in those two books.

This paper is the first in a number of papers that will explore the Islamic records to uncover possible locations in the great ancient city of Petra which would best correspond to the Islamic places of worship described in early Islamic history. While some people imagine that Petra is mostly centered on the Treasury Monument, most do not realize that the Petra Archeological Park is over 260 thousand square meters in size. Knowing that much of the city was leveled by an earthquake nineteen years before Muḥammad was born, I paid special attention to the open areas where sacred objects from Petra’s many pagan temples, as well as objects from the small Christian sector, might have been gathered for safe keeping. I also searched near the trebuchet stones uncovered by Brown University. This led to the discovery of what appears to be an early Ka’ba in front of what is known as Qasr al-Bint or the Dushara Temple. In this paper I will compare this site to the descriptions of the Ka’ba that are given to us by various Islamic scholars who wrote during the first three centuries of Islam.

1. The Pre-Islamic Ka’ba

Very little is known about the first pre-Islamic Ka’ba. However, from my survey of the earliest Qiblas, I concluded that the pre-Islamic Ka’ba must have been built in the city of Petra, because it was where all of the earliest Qiblas pointed. But first we need to learn something of the history of the Ka’ba.

From Islamic sources we learn that the history of this location goes back to Abraham and Ishmael. *Allah revealed to Ibrahim, may peace be on him, to erect the Ka’ba when he was one hundred years old and Isma’il was thirty years old, so he built it with him. Isma’il died after his father and was interred inside al- Ḥijr close to the Ka`ba by the side of his mother Hajar.* (Ibn Sa’ad Vol 1, 1.8.14. & Ṭabarī, Vol. I, p. 162, and Ibn Hishām 2)

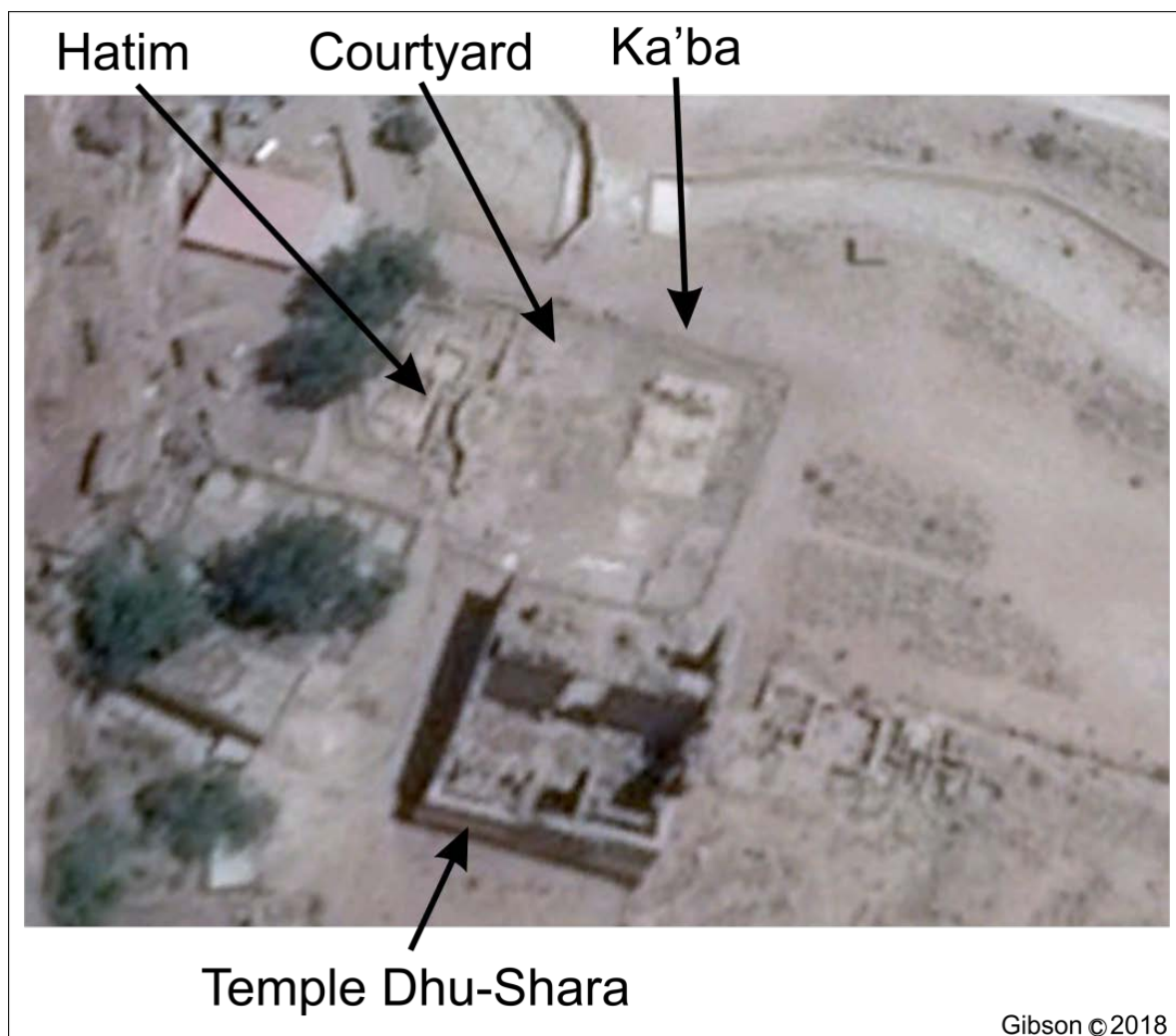
In the above description several things are evident. Muslims believe that the original Ka’ba was built by Abraham and Ishmael, and the graves of Hagar and her son are located there, near the Ka’ba.

We also have descriptions of the Pre-Islamic mosque. First, Ibn Hishām tells us that the original Ka'ba was a small, roofless enclosure, with walls a little higher than a man.

...the Quraysh decided to rebuild the Ka`ba when the apostle was thirty-five years of age. They were planning to roof it and feared to demolish it, for it was made of loose stones above a man's height, and they wanted to raise it and roof it because men had stolen part of the treasure of the Ka`ba which used to be in a well in the middle of it. (Ibn Hishām 44)

Azraqī (pg. 27) tells us that it was made of rough stone laid dry. The dimensions of the sides are listed as: north-east: 32 cubits, north-west: 22 cubits, south-west: 31 cubits, south-east: 20 cubits. So the proportions were roughly 3:2. If we calculate a cubit as 0.4572 meters, then the dimensions would have been: 14.63 meters x 10.6 meters x 14.17 meters x 9.1 meters.

The style of construction of the Ka'ba reflects that of a hastily thrown up structure. I spent several years living near Petra, and made over sixty trips into the city, as well as to areas around Petra. So when I read this, I immediately thought of an unexplained ancient structure located in front of the Dhu-Shara (Dushara) temple known today as Qasr al-Bint. (See Fig. 2 below).



Balādhurī notes that the houses and buildings of the city came so close to the Ka'ba, that when 'Umar later wanted to enlarge the area, they had to demolish some houses. (*Futūḥ al-Buldān*, Vol 1. p. 73-4) Using the measurements given by Azraqī, I illustrate the length of the NE side on the two drawings below. In the background I use satellite photos with a red line that illustrates 14.6 meters.

Note that in the left photo below, the length of the Ka'bs is shorter than the length described for the early Ka'ba. On the right, you can see that the red line fits the length of the proposed Ka'ba structure in Petra.



Fig. 3. The redline is 14.6 meters long, which was the length of the early Ka'ba. Clearly the Ka'ba in Saudi Arabia is smaller.



Fig. 4. Above: satellite photo showing the Ka'ba area in Petra. The red line, (14.6 meters) matches the length of the first Ka'ba.

There are several things to notice about the Ka'ba in Petra. On the left side of the Petra Ka'ba, there is a curved spot in the wall which corresponds to the Hatīm in Mecca. (The small curved all in front of the Ka'ba in Mecca. See Fig. 3 above). Some believe the graves of Ishmael and Hagar lie under this wall and so the wall curved around their burial spot. In ancient times it seems that a grave stone stood there, known as *Ḥijr Isma'il* or the *Rock of Ishmael*. (Ibn Sa'ad Vol 1, 1.8.14; Ṭabarī, Vol. I, p. 162, and Ibn Hishām 2)

Also note that the Ka'ba building stood in one corner of the walled area. This significant feature must have been copied to the Ka'ba built years later in Mecca (Saudi Arabia) because it is specifically mentioned by Azraqī (pg. 267). When the third Abbasid Caliph, al-Mahdī, visited the Ka'ba in Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 780-81, he saw that "the Ka'ba was on one side (*fi shiqq*) of the mosque; he did not like that and wished that it be in the middle (*mutawassata*) of the mosque."

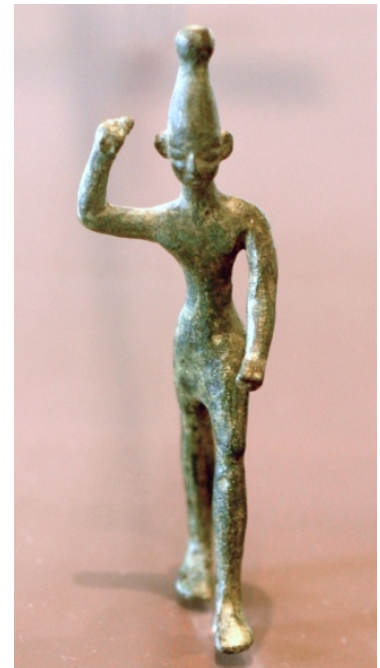
Later under al-Mahdī, the Mecca mosque was changed so that the Ka’ba was in the centre. Oleg Grabar (*Upon Reading al-Azraqī*) notes “It is interesting that this patron of Baghdad, with its palace complex in the center of an urban ring, also transformed the sanctuary of Mecca into a large space around a holy place. It is curious to note that both the second Abassid caliph, al-Manṣur, and al-Mahdī had traveled to Jerusalem and had seen there a vast and only partially rebuilt esplanade with a stunning Umayyad monument in its psychological, if not actual, center, and then made major changes to the mosque [grounds] around the Ka’ba in Mecca.”

I mention this, because the Ka’ba in Petra still resides near one corner of the complex. This Ka’ba must predate what the later caliphs modified in Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Another unique feature of the Petra Ka’ba is its proximity to the great pagan temple known as *Qasr al Bint*, also known as the temple of Dushara (Dhu-Shara). This is an interesting name, for it is not the name of a pagan god, but a description meaning Lord of the Shara Mountains. (Healey, 2001, pg. 87) Arabic: ذو الشراة *Du-al- Šarā* means "the one (Lord) of the Šarā mountain range". Healey notes that we are not told the actual name of this god, and as a result scholars have been “much concerned with trying to find the true name of this supreme god.” (Healey, 2001, p. 85) However, when we consider the closeness that this temple had to the Ka’ba, and that the steps of this temple actually form part of the wall around the Ka’ba enclosure we might now be able to combine what Islamic history tells us with Nabataean history and possibly identify the god of this temple. In the *Book of Idols*, *Kitabl al-Asnam*, by Hisham ibn al Kalbi we read:

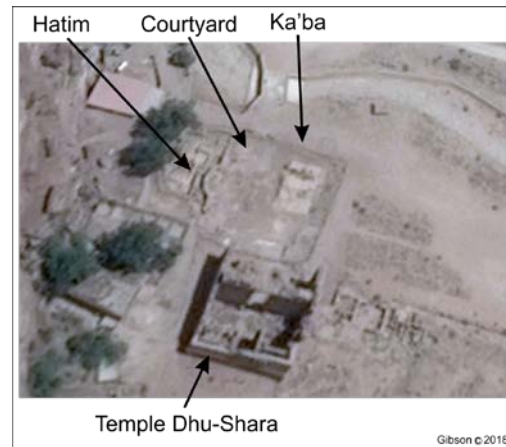
The Quraysh had also several idols in and around the Ka'ba. The greatest of these was Hubal. It was, as I was told, of red agate, in the form of a man with the right hand broken off. It came into the possession of the Quraysh in this condition, and they, therefore, made for it a hand of gold. The first to set it up was Khuzaymah ibn-Mudrikah ibn-al-Ya's' ibn-Mudar. Consequently it used to be called Khuzaymah's Hubal. It stood inside the Ka'ba. In front of it were seven divination arrows (aqduh). On one of these arrows was written "pure" (sarih), and on another "consociated alien" (mulsag).

Right: Fig. 5: A god figure with the right hand raised for holding a lightning bolt. In a future paper I will compare this idol with what we know of Hubal.



Look again at the satellite photo. (Fig. 6) right. It is clear that the Dhu-Shara temple is largest structure in this part of Petra, and that it was the closest major structure to the Ka'ba. Therefore, we might conclude that Hubal's statue resided in this temple.

There are a number of Arabian inscriptions that mention the god Hubal, in almost all cases directly related to the ancient Nabataean people. There is one inscription on a tomb in the ancient city of Meda'in Salih.



The inscription on Tomb #39 mentions which family the tomb was intended for. If it is sold, or given in a pledge or as a gift, or if bodies or parts are removed then *they* “shall be liable to Dushara Hubalu and also to Manatu in the sum of 5 shamads and to the exorcist-priest for a fine of a thousand Haretite sela’s...” (Serjeant, 1993, pg. 206)

Note that there are only two options for paying the fine to the deities: Dushara/Hubalu and then second to Manotu. Healey notes that there is no “l” before Hubal’s name, which doubly enforces the idea that they are identified together here. (Healey, 2001, pg. 128) In a future paper, I would like to deal with the history of Hubal and the suggestions that have been made about this god but in this paper I would like to restrict the focus entirely on the Ka’ba.

However, we must ask if this temple in Petra was always Hubal’s temple? All we know is that near the center of Petra the Nabataean leader, Obodas III, constructed a Nabataean temple in the first century CE on an earlier foundation. This temple had three chambers for three god statues. Archeologists have suggest that the three were al-‘Uzza, Allat, and an unidentified god, which I am suggesting was Hubal. As is mentioned in the quote on page 7, still within Arab memory was the name of the person who had set up Hubal’s idol in the temple, so it may have happened within several hundred years before the beginning of Islam.

Zayd ibn-'Amr ibn-Nufayl who, during the Jahiliyah days, had turned to the worship of Allah and renounced that of al-'Uzza and of the other idols, said: "I have renounced both Allat and al-'Uzza, for thus would the brave and the robust do. No more do I worship al-'Uzza ...nor do I journey to Hubal (idol) and adore it, Although it was our lord when I was young"
(Book of Idols, Kitabl al-Asnam, by Hisham ibn al Kalbi)

At the end of the third century CE the Qasr al-Bint temple was looted and intentionally destroyed by fire. A few years later it was struck by the 363 CE earthquake, and two hundred years later by

the earthquake of 551 CE. During these time of upheaval, the old idols could have been removed and others replaced.

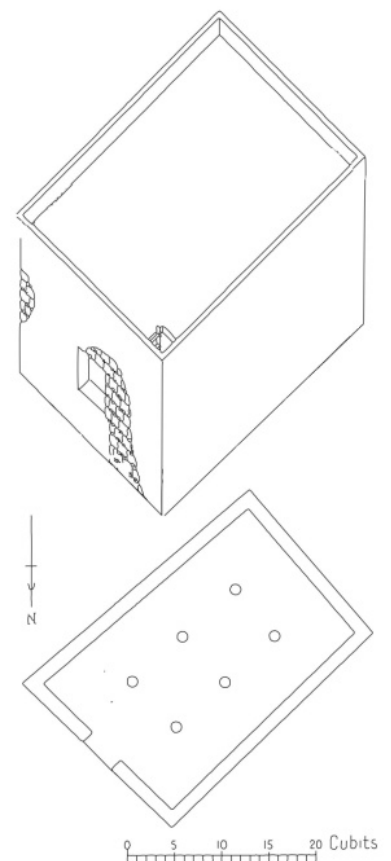
2. Ka'ba built during Muḥammad's lifetime

When Muḥammad was 35 years old, the Ka'ba was in ill repair, so it was rebuilt by the Quraysh. (Ibn Hisham 44) At this time a ship was wrecked on some reefs (shu'aibiya) on the Red Sea. (Ibn Sa'ad 38) Ibn Sa'ad writing in 200 years later assumes this was a location close to Mecca, so he suggests modern Jeddah, and this was copied by other writers following him, but the earliest accounts simply say reefs (shu'aibiya). A builder named Bāqūm was onboard, and it was he who helped them rebuild the Ka'ba. This story is repeated by most of the early writers, because it was during this rebuilding that Muḥammad was chosen to place the Black Stone into the Ka'ba wall, demonstrating his acceptance, as well as his first public act. According to Ṭabarī (Vol 6, page 58) the old Ka'ba was demolished right down to the foundation stones and it was rebuilt from there. Azraqī (pg. 95) describes the type of architecture used in the building of this Ka'ba, both at this point in time and later at the burning of the of the Ka'ba in 63 AH. He says that the door which had been previously at ground level was placed high on the side of the structure. (Thus this Ka'ba was built on a raised stone platform).

Balādhurī (pg. 74) adds that during the rebuilding, a certain Abū Ḥadhaifa ibn al-Mughīra said: *"Raise, people, the door of the Ka'ba so that no one may enter without a ladder. When would no man whom you do not want to enter be able to do so. In case someone you hate should come, you may throw him down."* Bāqūm then asked what sort of roof they wanted, and they replied a flat one. This roof rested on six pillars (sawāri) arranged in two rows of three each, and the height of the new structure was 18 cubits (8.23 meters or 27 feet) instead of nine cubits. (1 cubit is 0.4572 meters)

Then they constructed it, till they reached the place of logs. There were fifteen girders on which they put its roof and there were six pillars on which they constructed it. (Ibn Sa'ad Vol. 1, 1.38.1)

Fig. 7. Right: Bāqūm's Ka'ba, reconstructed from Creswell



Azraqī (pg. 191) also describes the interior of the Ka'ba, with decorated ceiling, walls and columns. On the columns they made pictures (ṣuwar) of the prophets, trees and angels. Among the pictures there was one of Ibrahim as an old man practicing divination by means of arrows, a picture of ʾIsā ibn Maryam and his mother, as well as angels. These images were later erased under Muḥammad's command during his conquest of the Holy City.

Azraqī (pg. 90) tells us that the new Ka'ba was built with a course of stone alternating with a course of wood, up to the roof. There were 16 courses of stone, and 15 of wood, altogether 31 courses beginning and ending with stone. Between every two courses of stone was a layer of ṣāsam wood with round heads the thickness of a man's chest projecting from the surface. As so much wood was involved, it would seem that this form of construction could only be used in places where large quantities of wood were available.

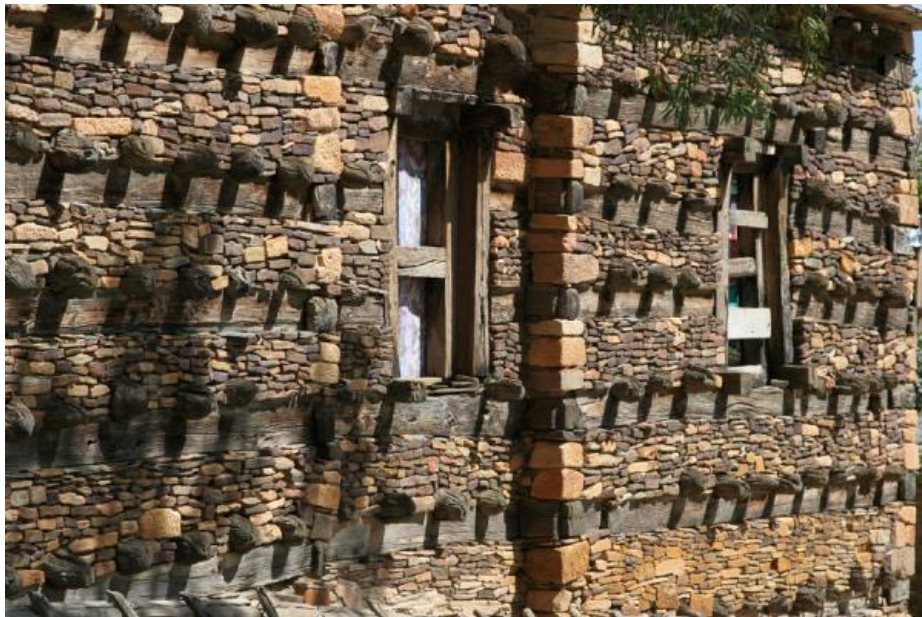


Fig. 8 Above: the Debre-Damo monastery in Ethiopia was built during the 6th century with layers of stone and wood very similar to how the Ka'ba construction is described.

In the photo below, you can see that the remains of the platform on which the Ka'ba stood was raised with stones so that the door would be higher up. The Ka'ba building is gone, but at least five courses of the stone platform remain.



Above: Figure 9. This photo is taken from a distance, so that the Ka'ba foundation looks much closer to Qasr al-Bint than it really is.

3. The Ibn Zubayr Ka'ba

Al-Azraqī (pg. 260) tells us that when Ibn Zubayr ruled over Mecca (680-92), he acquired houses and parts of houses, including one belonging to an ancestor of al-Azraqi, and enlarged the sacred space around the Ka'ba, but without altering its simple character.

However, when disagreements and eventual fighting broke out between the caliph in Damascus and Ibn Zubayr, he barricaded himself in the holy city (Petra), and the Syrian army brought a ballista for throwing stones and burning objects into the city.

It was during this first siege that the Ka'ba was set on fire. This was about 64 AH or 683 CE. (Ṭabarī Vol 19, page 223) Others claimed that the fire came from a firebrand on the end of a spear, that struck the veil of the Ka'ba and set it on fire, which resulted in the wood burning. (Balādhurī, page 75, Ṭabarī pg 225) One would assume that the Ka'ba building was in a precarious state, as the fire would have seriously weakened the wood beams. Al Ṭabarī (Vol. 20, page 123) tells us that next Ibn Zubayr took the Black Stone and placed it in a stand (*tābūt*) on a strip of silk. After this the people used to pray outside the foundation stones while facing the site. He then demolished the structure so that he could rebuild it. During this time Caliph Mu'āwiyah in Damascus died and the army returned to Damascus. Since he had no children and either refused or was not given the opportunity to appoint a successor, the campaigns against Ibn al-Zubayr's revolt came to a complete stop. Umayyad power temporarily collapsed until Marwan I took back control.

As I point out in the book *Early Islamic Qiblas*, (pg. 172) it was during this time that the Black Stone must have been moved to Mecca in Saudi Arabia to keep it far from the Umayyad armies, as soon after this that there is mention of *Ibn Zubayr's qibla* (Ṭabarī 21:107).

It was seven years before the new caliph sent General al-Ḥajjāj and his army to retake the city. (72 AH, Ṭabarī Vol. 21 page 206) It is notable that al-Ḥajjāj led the pilgrimage that year (p. 208) but did not circumambulate the Ka'ba, nor did he go to it in pilgrim 's garb (*iḥrām*). He also rode a horse up 'Arafah in full armor rather than travel as a pilgrim. (page 209) This blatant disregard of Islamic traditions speaks volumes about Ḥajjāj's view of the pilgrimage. Could this have been caused by the missing Black Stone?

We know that in 66 AH (685 CE), during the 2nd civil war, during the dispute with Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah, Abū 'Abdallāh al Jadālī swears “by the Lord of the Corner and the Station...” but does not mention the Black Stone which would have been in the corner. This strange utterance suggests to us that the Black Stone was no longer in the Ka'ba wall. (Ṭabarī Vol. 21, pg 61 & Vol. 23 pg 222) This may explain why Ḥajjāj was so upset with the pilgrimage. How could one pray to the Ka'ba if the Black Stone was not present?

During this time, Ibn Zubayr and his followers were barricaded in a building near the Ka'ba. When archeologists from Brown university uncovered the ruins of what they called “The Great Temple” in Petra, the discovered that the doors and gaps in the building had been barricaded for defense. It would seem that this was the building that Ibn Zubayr and his followers chose for their final defense. This final battle took eight months and seventeen days. During this time, the Syrians used a manjaniq or a trebuchet to hurl stones. (Ṭabarī Vol 21., page 225).



Fig. 10

Left: Photo of catapult stones found near the Gate of the Colonnaded Street.



*Fig. 11
Left: Area around
the Petra Ka'ba*

Ṭabari (Vol 22 pg. 1) tells us that when Ibn Zubayr rebuilt the Ka'ba he had included the Hijr inside the Ka'ba and that he gave the Ka'ba two doors. Soon after the fighting ended, Ḥajjāj attempted to restore the Ka'ba to its original form. Very little is known of this reconstruction. (74 AH) After this he traveled to Medina. However, he treated the people harshly, and he even forced the companions of the prophet to wear seals around their necks. This act showed outright contempt for anyone who was in a position to oppose him. In the months and years that followed, Ḥajjāj continually showed contempt for traditional Islam and sought to introduce new reforms. This, however, is not the subject of this paper, but it has a bearing on how al-Ḥajjāj constructed his own mosques.

4. The Ka'ba in Saudi Arabia

If the Black Stone was moved to Saudi Arabia around 65 AH (684 CE) to keep the Umayyad armies from taking it, then when was the Ka'ba structure and the rest of Masjid al-Ḥarām built around it? To answer this question we once again need to turn to archeology. In the region of Ḥuma al-Numūr, north west of Ṭā'if (about 60 km from Mecca) over 60 early Islamic inscriptions

have been found.* These include verses of the Qur’ān, supplications asking for forgiveness, mercy, martyrdom and paradise; trust and belief in the Prophet Muḥammad and the sending of prayers and blessings upon him. One inscription stands out as it contains the full shahādah and also mention of the building of Masjid al-Ḥarām that year.

This inscription clearly uses the word “banā or built. It also clearly claims that it was written “*in year 78, the year that Masjid al-Ḥarām was constructed.*” There can be no doubt which location this is speaking of, as it is only 60 km from Mecca and over a thousand kilometers from Petra.

History tells us that Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān started the reconstruction of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in the year 75 AH so it appears that it either took four years to complete, or at this point two Masjid al-Ḥarāms might have existed, one in the original location in Petra, and the other with the Black Stone in Saudi. How did this dilemma get solved? When later earthquakes destroyed the Ka’ba in Petra, flooding washed away much of what was left until only the foundation and a five courses of stone remained.

In Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, the Black Stone was attracting pilgrims. From the inscription mentioned above, we can deduce that in 78 AH the buildings were completed and people identified the location it as Masjid al-Ḥarām. A quick study of the political situation at that time throws some light on the religious situation in Mecca.

Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (عبد الملك ابن مروان, A.H.65–86/A.D.685–705) was the caliph, but the Islamic world was going through a time of turmoil, with repeated rebellions and divisions among the people. Abd al-Malik made many important changes during his reign. First of all, he used General Ḥajjāj as his strongman, putting down military rebellions, even though Abd al-Malik begged him to use less force, and not to disturb the Islamic religion.

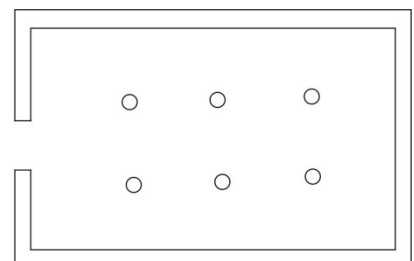
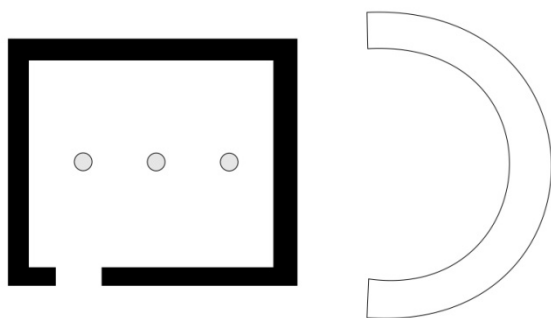
* Hoyland, “The Content And Context Of Early Arabic Inscriptions”, *Jerusalem Studies In Arabic And Islam*, 1997, Volume 21, Number 3, pp. 77-102; idem., *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A Survey And Evaluation Of Christian, Jewish And Zoroastrian Writings On Early Islam*, 1997, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam - 13, The Darwin Press, Inc.: Princeton (NJ), pp. 687-703; idem., “New Documentary Texts And The Early Islamic State”, *Bulletin Of The School Of Oriental And African Studies*, 2006, Volume 69, Number 3, pp. 395-416. Also see: <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Inscriptions/haram1.html> Retrieved 9 Feb 2017.

Abd al-Malik also worked hard to bring the Islamic world together. As an example, he made Arabic the official language of the Islamic world, and had all important records translated into Arabic. Second, he tried to unite that various mints to produce one common currency. He also introduced many reforms relating to agriculture and commerce, and he organized a regular postal service.

By 78 AH, Ḥajjāj was still putting down rebellions, while Caliph Abd al-Malik was all about unifying the Muslim empire. So it seems that the Caliph was content to let the Black Stone remain in Mecca. He also starting the tradition of weaving a large silk cover for the Ka’ba building, using skilled workers from Damascus. During this time Abd al-Malik also built the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Perhaps this monument was also intended to help unify the Islamic world, as some were still clinging to Petra, and some were focused on Mecca. This is why I tend to label this period as the beginning of the *Time of Confusion*.

During the reign of 'Abd al-Malik the outer walls of the Mecca Ka’ba were raised and a covered area was built, consisting of a portico with a wooden ceiling; the capitals or upper parts of the supports were gilt. Mas’ūdī tells us that glass mosaics (*fusaifisā*) and three marble columns were taken from the church that Abraha built in Yemen. (*Prairies*, Vol 5., pg. 192-3) Figure 13 below demonstrates that three columns are still in the Ka’ba in Saudi Arabia. This is a very strong indicator that ‘Abd al-Malik built in Mecca and not in Petra.

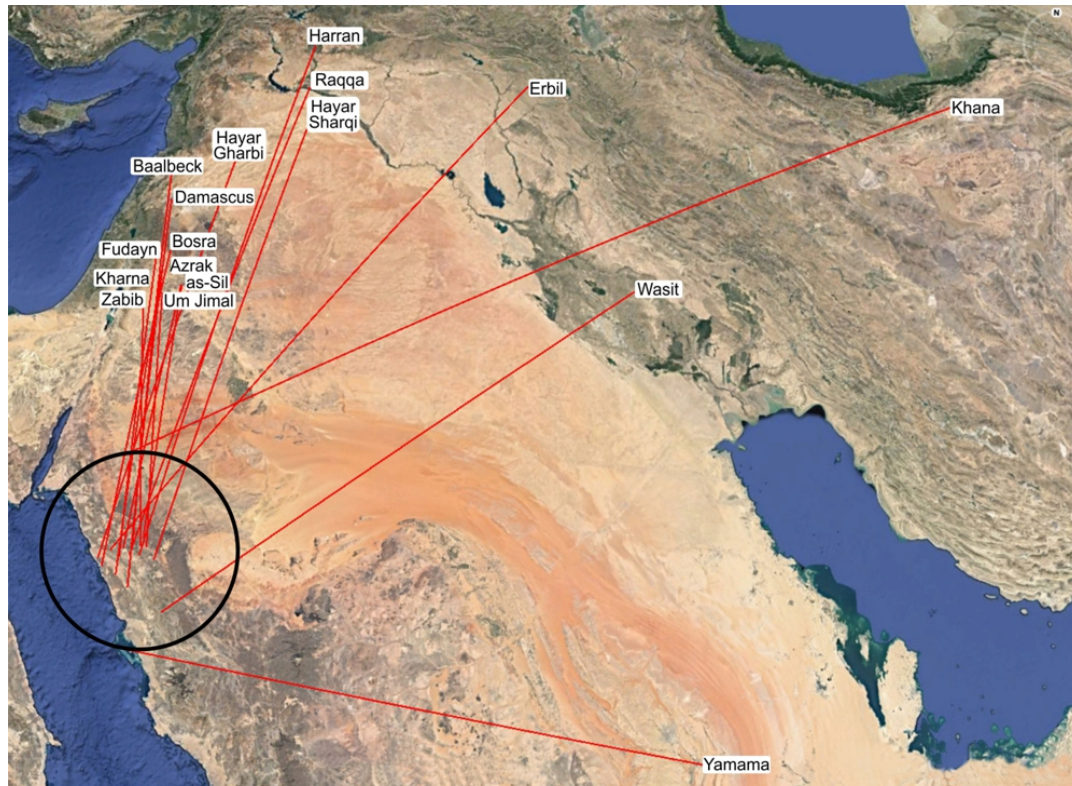
When his father died 'Abd al-Malik’s son Al-Walīd I (الوليد الأول) A.H.86–96/A.D.705–715 became caliph. While the new caliph was still solidifying his control, General Ḥajjāj again broke with Islamic tradition. At this point there were two places called Masjid al-Ḥarām, and Ḥajjāj seems to be pleased with neither of them. So Ḥajjāj ignores al-Walīd I and points the Qibla of his new mosque in Wāsiṭ to a neutral place between Petra and Mecca. (Gibson, EIQ, pg. 41) This practice was followed by at least 17 new mosques over the next 40 years. This practice only ends when an earthquake destroys what remained of the city of Petra in 128 AH (745 CE). After this, all Qiblas pointed to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.



12: Above left: Ka’ba in Mecca with the three pillars from Yemen.

Above right: Ka’ba in Petra with six pillars.

Al-Walid continued to make improvements in Mecca and is remembered for having covered supports with marble, and soffits or spandrels (*wajh al-tayqīn*) with mosaics. He also added crenellations and moldings, (if this is the correct way of interpreting the word *shurrafit*.) It is interesting to note that the verb used to mean "cover," as with marble, is *azzara*, which means to "veil" or to "cover with a piece of clothing."



Left: Fig. 13
Mosques pointing
between
Petra and Mecca

Illustration of the *Between* mosques ©2018

Abbasids

Once the Abbasids took control of the Islamic Empire, under al-Manṣūr, (A.H.136–158/A.D.754–775) they proclaimed the unique holiness of the Ka'ba in Mecca. In 754 and 758 they began a major program of construction, ordered by the caliph. It was commemorated by a triumphal inscription on a newly built gate in black mosaic cubes on a gold background, and one of its two Qur'anic quotations proclaims that "the first house appointed to Me was the one at Bacca." The area around the Ka'ba was increased through the acquisition of houses and extensive decorations were added. Formal gates were also added plus the construction of a *manāra*, possibly meaning a minaret.

The next caliph, al-Mahdī (775-85), went on a pilgrimage in 776-77 and immediately undertook a major program of repairs and modifications. It is described in much detail by al-Azraqi (pg. 263-266) especially the main gates, vaulted arcades, and open spaces.

Four years later, in 780-81, al-Mahdī returned to Mecca and, having inspected the work done, saw that "the Ka'ba was on one side (*fi shiqq*) of the mosque; he did not like that and wished that it be in the middle (*mutawassa.ta*) of the mosque."

All of this helps us understand that the major construction of the Ka'ba in Mecca Saudi Arabia took place when the Ka'ba in Petra was in ruins.

Conclusion

I realize that this material is very hard for Muslims to accept. They have been taught for centuries that the only Ka'ba ever built, existed in Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Now using modern tools we can see that the original Ka'ba was most likely in Petra. Indeed the foundation of a structure remains there that looks very much like an early Ka'ba, and fits the dimensions and descriptions of the Ka'ba as it existed in the lifetime of the prophet and the first four caliphs.

On the other hand, the Ka'ba in Saudi Arabia appears to be smaller, and oriented slightly different from the Petra Ka'ba, and the ḥatim wall has been moved closer to the Ka'ba.

Along with this, there is an inscription in Saudi Arabia stating that Masjid al-Ḥarām was built in 78 AH. So it appears that the first three Ka'bas were built in Petra, and the final Ka'ba was built in Saudi Arabia.

This creates a theological issue. From the dating of mosque construction, we can see that the prophet Muḥammad, and all the rightly guided caliphs prayed towards Petra. It would seem that those who want to follow the commands of their prophet, and their book should pray to Masjid al-Ḥarām in Petra. The evolution of Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca happened many years after the prophet died. So, how will this affect the merit gained by those praying towards a later Qibla? Will they be accepted by God? What about foods killed facing a later Qibla? Are they Halāl? And what of pilgrimages to the later Masjid al-Ḥarām? Do they count for anything?

The question of the correct Qibla is not just an interesting sideline, it is part of the very central message of Islam. I am concerned for my Muslim friends. What does this mean for them? I think the archeology and histories are quite clear. What needs to be considered now are theological questions.

Dan Gibson, April 2018

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